

# SUPERFUND

## Fact Sheet

### NORTHWEST TRANSFORMER SUPERFUND SITE

Whatcom County, Washington



U S ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY REGION 10

August 1999

EPA Proposes to Delete the Northwest Transformer Site from the Superfund List.

*The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposes to delete the Northwest Transformer Superfund Site from the National Priorities List, or NPL. EPA and the Washington Department of Ecology have determined that all appropriate response measures have been implemented at the site and that no further cleanup actions are required. The public is invited to comment on the proposed deletion through September 24, 1999.*

EPA announces the proposed deletion of the Northwest Transformer Superfund Site located at the intersection of Mission and East Pole Roads in Whatcom County, Washington, from the NPL. A *Notice of Intent to Delete* the site was published in the Federal Register on August 25, 1999. This notice explains EPA's decision to propose deleting the site. The *Notice of Intent to Delete* and other information about the site is available for public review at the Whatcom County Public Library, 5205 Northwest Road, Bellingham, Washington 98226-9092, and at the EPA Regional Office, 1200 Sixth Avenue, Seattle, Washington 98101.

EPA and the Washington State Department of Ecology have determined that all appropriate response actions under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), as amended, have been implemented and no further cleanup is needed. EPA and Ecology also have determined that remedial actions conducted at the site have been protective of public health, welfare, and the environment.

#### WHAT IS THE NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST?

The National Priorities List, commonly called the NPL, is a list of the nation's most contaminated hazardous waste sites. Sites on the NPL are eligible for investigation and if necessary cleanup under CERCLA, commonly known as the Superfund law. The law requires EPA to identify Potentially Responsible Parties and seek to have them perform any necessary investigation and cleanup under EPA oversight and to reimburse the government for its oversight costs.

#### COMMENT PERIOD

The public is invited to comment on the proposed deletion. The public comment period will last for 30 days, from August 25, until September 24, 1999. Written comments must be postmarked by that date and should be addressed to:

Timothy H. Brincefield  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
(ECL-115)  
1200 Sixth Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98101

Oral comments will also be taken through these dates and should be directed to Mr. Brincefield at (206) 553-2100 or EPA's toll-free number, 1-800-424-4372, x2100.



## Background

The Northwest Transformer Superfund Site occupies about 1.6 acres in Whatcom County, Washington. The property adjacent to the site to the south and west is currently used as a gravel pit. To the north across East Pole Road and east across Mission Road are private residences. The NW Transformer Service Company (NWTSC) used the site for storage, refurbishing and disposal of electrical transformers containing Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) from 1958-1985. This resulted in contamination of an old barn on site and soils down to a depth of 35 feet in some places. The site was proposed to the NPL in 1984.

The 1993-94 soil remediation included removal and off-site disposal of almost 4,700 tons of PCB-contaminated soils and barn debris. The remediation was fully successful and eliminated known risks associated with the site. The cost was about \$7 million dollars. The March 30, 1994, Preliminary Close Out Report and the December 30, 1994, Remedial Action Completion Report provide complete details of the remedial action objectives for site soils and how they were attained. However, since groundwater from one well on site was found in 1993-94 to slightly exceed federal and state limits for PCBs in groundwater, additional groundwater monitoring and at least one CERCLA Five Year Review was required to ensure that the remedy remained protective and no further remedial action was warranted.

Groundwater monitoring was performed periodically from 1993-99. No wells off-site or around the perimeter of the site have ever shown evidence of groundwater contamination. The one well in the center of the site from which samples were collected periodically from 1993-96 contained evidence of contamination slightly above cleanup goals, has improved. Two rounds of sampling since 1997 have shown that

## Chronology of events following 1984 NPL listing:

- 1985: EPA conducted Emergency Removal;
- 1987-88: EPA conducted Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study;
- 1989: EPA issued Record of Decision (ROD) calling for on-site treatment as the remedy for contaminated soils;
- 1990: Treatability Study raised questions about cost-effectiveness of the soil remedy;
- 1991: Consent Decree between U.S. and former site owners and operators recovers some past costs and establishes soil and groundwater Institutional Controls; EPA issues Proposed Plan and Amended ROD for Off-Site Incineration/Disposal of contaminated soils;
- 1992: U.S. and former NWTSC customers (Potentially Responsible Parties, or PRPs) sign Consent Decree; former customers agree to perform Remedial Action and pay U.S. costs;
- 1993-94: PRPs conduct successful Remedial Action and achieve soil cleanup goals; EPA issues Preliminary Closeout Report and confirms Construction Completion;
- 1993-99: PRPs conduct groundwater monitoring program;
- 1997-99: Groundwater results achieve federal and state groundwater goals;
- 1998-99: EPA conducts Five-Year Review, confirms that cleanup goals have been met, no further remedial action needed, but Institutional Controls must remain in effect;
- 1999: EPA completes Final Closeout Report.

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all wells are in compliance with federal and state cleanup and groundwater protection requirements. EPA's Five Year Review concluded that the remedy remains protective and no further remedial action is warranted.

EPA issued a Final Close Out Report documenting completion of all remedial actions and achievement of all cleanup goals for this site on August 12, 1999. EPA bases its proposal to delete the site on the determination by EPA and Ecology that the remedial action is complete and is protective of human health and the environment, and on groundwater monitoring results which show no evidence of off-site groundwater contamination and no on-site contamination above levels of potential concern. All appropriate actions under CERCLA have been implemented. No further response is appropriate. The site will require no further maintenance once the Potentially Responsible Parties abandon the wells on-site in accordance with Ecology requirements, which they will do as soon as the site is deleted.

Institutional controls are being maintained in the form of deed notices, which require notice to Ecology prior to deep excavation of soils or to EPA prior to installation of water supply wells on the site. Any owner or lessee planning to excavate below 15 feet will have to notify Ecology and take appropriate precautions to protect worker health and safety, public health, and the environment in the event any residual contamination is encountered. Any owner or lessee planning to use groundwater from the site will have to notify EPA, sample the groundwater, and provide results to EPA which confirm the groundwater remains safe, before using the groundwater.

The site will be subject to reviews at least every five years to ensure that institutional controls remain in force and have been followed. Deletion of the site from the NPL will not prohibit EPA from taking remedial actions in the future, if new information indicates that such actions are warranted.

If you have questions about this proposal, please call EPA Project Manager,  
**Timothy H. Brincefield** at  
(206) 553-2100,  
or toll-free at  
1-800-424-4372 x2100.

To ensure effective communication with everyone, additional services can be made available to persons with disabilities by contacting one of the numbers listed above.



United States  
Environmental Protection  
Agency

Region 10 (ECO-081)  
1200 Sixth Avenue  
Seattle WA 98101

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Permit No. G-35

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